DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 444 961 SP 039 412

AUTHOR	Smith, Christine L.
TITLE	Focus on Legislation Affecting Teachers in SREB States.
INSTITUTION	Southern Regional Education Board, Atlanta, GA.
PUB DATE	2000-06-00
NOTE	9p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Southern Regional Education Board, 592 10th Street, N.W., Atlanta, GA 30318; Tel: 404-875-9211; Web site: http://www.sreb.org.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; *Alternative Teacher Certification; *Educational Legislation; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Faculty Development; Mentors; *State Legislation; Teacher Evaluation; *Teacher Improvement; *Teacher Recruitment; *Teacher Salaries; Teacher Shortage; Teaching Skills
IDENTIFIERS	*Southern Regional Education Board

ABSTRACT

This report highlights Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states' recent legislation affecting teachers. Section 1 examines teacher licensure and certification, looking at such action taken by states as requiring teachers to know how to use technology in order to get or renew licenses and addressing the issue of teachers' content knowledge in the subjects they teach. This section also discusses national certification. Section 2 looks at teacher recruitment, focusing on alternative certification programs, critical teacher shortage areas, and low-performing schools. Section 3 discusses teacher performance and pay, explaining that SREB states are focusing on creative, fair, effective evaluations of teachers and on providing assistance to teachers with unsatisfactory performance. States are also working to increase salaries for new and veteran teachers and to reward teachers who accept additional responsibilities. Section 4 examines support for teachers, noting that states are making considerable efforts to support new teachers through mentor programs and to provide all teachers with professional development opportunities. Section 5 looks at other actions taken by local school boards. Section 6 describes upcoming studies on the issue. (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

SP

ED 444 961

Focus *on Legislation Affecting Teachers in SREB States*

SREB

Christine L. Smith

Teacher quality and accountability are not new issues for SREB states, but recent state actions have taken a fresh approach to these issues. In the 1980s, states' efforts to raise standards for teachers included revising licensure laws, requiring exams for certification (though standards were low), and providing incentive pay based on teachers' extra work rather than on student success. Today, states' efforts to recruit and retain quality teachers include more stringent standards for licensure and evaluation; increased salaries; incentives for teachers who achieve advanced certification and who mentor other teachers; and professional development. States also are working to attract quality teachers to low-performing schools and critical shortage areas. This report highlights SREB states' recent legislation affecting teachers. The SREB Educational Benchmarks 2000 series publication *Getting Beyond Talk: State Leadership Needed to Improve Teacher Quality* provides more information on states' actions related to teacher issues.

Teacher licensure and certification

States have taken several actions to strengthen licensure requirements for teachers. These actions include requiring teachers to know how to use technology in order to get or renew licenses and addressing the issue of teachers' content knowledge in the subjects they teach.

In 1999, Virginia tightened the requirements for entrance to teacher education programs, for initial licensure and for license renewal. Legislation in 2000 allows local school boards to issue a limited number of three-year licenses to candidates who do not meet the requirements for state-issued licenses. The licenses are valid only in the issuing district and are not renewable. The intent is for teachers with these local licenses to complete additional training and apply for a state-issued license.

This year, Georgia added proficiency with computers to its requirements for teacher licensure and license renewal. Applicants for license renewal must have worked as classroom teachers for at least five days each school year; if not, they must complete a teacher training course approved by the Professional Standards Commission.

The Delaware Professional Development and Educator Accountability Act of 2000 revises the licensing system to emphasize the importance of professional development. Teachers' initial licenses will be valid for three years. To be eligible for a continuing license, these teachers must work with mentor teachers and must participate in professional development. The continuing license is renewable after five years and 90 hours of professional development.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M.A. Sullivan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

June 2000

Southern Regional Education Board

592 10th St. N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30318
(404) 875-9211
www.sreb.org

SP034912

The Southern Regional Education Board Focus *series will report on timely education issues.*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Teachers who have been certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards receive an advanced license.

Beginning in 2002, Florida will use new licensure exams. Also that year, the state will accept passing scores on new subject-area tests — in lieu of coursework in these subjects — for initial certification and for the addition of a subject area to a certificate. The state will issue three-year temporary certificates and will allow teachers one year to satisfy basic requirements. Florida also will recognize the licenses of out-of-state teachers who have standard certificates and have taught for at least two years.

Legislation pending in South Carolina would establish a panel to recommend standards for middle-grades teacher preparation and professional-development courses. If approved, the legislation would require the state Board of Education to establish requirements for middle grades certification and to determine ways to phase in initial and add-on certification. Seventh- and eighth-grade math teachers in Oklahoma are required to be certified in middle grades or high school math. Teachers without the appropriate certification will have until 2003 to obtain middle grades certification. The state will pay for teachers to obtain appropriate certification or to complete a professional-development institute in math. Another law in Oklahoma requires honors courses to be taught by teachers certified in that subject area.

Kentucky law requires the Education Professional Standards Board to define out-of-field teaching, to review its policy on emergency certification and to determine whether that policy increases out-of-field teaching. Teachers who are assigned to teach classes outside their areas of expertise will be identified, and districts will have the opportunity to correct the situation during the year. Parents in Florida must be notified when teachers are assigned classes outside their areas of certification, minor fields of study or subject areas in which they have demonstrated expertise. Other states addressed this issue in 1999 sessions. Parents in Texas must be notified if their children are taught by an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher for more than 30 consecutive days. Arkansas resolved that, by 2006, teachers no longer will be assigned to grade levels and subjects for which they are not licensed.

While SREB states are tightening certification requirements, they also are providing support to those who want to achieve or maintain certification. In Georgia, an instructional aide or paraprofessional who wants to pursue a bachelor's degree in a program that leads to certification may be eligible for a PROMISE II scholarship. The scholarship covers tuition, books and mandatory fees. For each year a person receives the scholarship, he or she is expected to teach one year in Georgia. Legislation passed in 1999 in Maryland allows teachers to receive a $1,500 tax credit for graduate-level courses required to maintain certification. The state does not give tax credit to teachers for tuition covered by the local school board.

National certification

Most SREB states offer incentives for teachers to pursue certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Several states took action on incentives during 2000 legislative sessions. Information on bonuses in other SREB states is in the Educational Benchmarks 2000 publication *Teacher Salaries and State Priorities for Education Quality — A Vital Link.*

In Georgia, teachers who gain national certification will receive a 10 percent salary increase (up from 5 percent). Delaware set a salary bonus of 12 percent annually for teachers who earn national certification; previously, these teachers were awarded $1,500 per year. Lawmakers in Kentucky set a goal of having at least one nationally certified teacher in every public school by 2020. The state will provide teachers preparing for national certification with stipends and partial fee reimbursement. Local school boards will be reimbursed for substitute teachers, and teachers who serve as mentors will receive stipends. Each teacher who achieves certification will receive a $2,000 salary bonus annually for the life of the certificate.

This session, Virginia joined other states, including Florida and North Carolina, in recognizing the licenses of out-of-state teachers with national certification. Teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or by another nationally recognized program approved by the state Board of Education will not be required to submit official student transcripts to become certified in Virginia. Pending legislation in South Carolina exempts teachers with national certification from initial certification requirements.

Recruitment

SREB states recognize that there are significant shortages of teachers in certain subjects and geographic areas. States also face the challenge of recruiting and retaining quality teachers in low-performing schools. To address these problems, states are providing incentives — including loans, scholarships and bonuses — for teachers who fill in these gaps. They also are recruiting teachers among retired teachers, military personnel and other professionals.

Alternative certification

Kentucky, which has some alternative-certification programs already in place, is starting an alternative route to teacher certification for military veterans. Veterans who meet set requirements receive a provisional teaching certificate and participate in an internship program. Upon successful completion of the internship, the veteran receives a regular professional certificate. In a similar alternative-certification program, Florida deleted the requirement that retired military personnel must have served for 20 years. Virginia appropriated funds in the 2000-02 budget to an alternative-certification program for military personnel. Each year the state will provide funding for training and teaching materials, 15 hours of coursework for the teacher candidates and bonuses for mentors.

In the 1999 session, Texas committed to expanding teacher recruitment programs to reach high school and college students, veterans, professionals, minorities and men. Through the Teach for Texas pilot alternative-certification program, professionals who have bachelor's degrees will receive financial assistance to become certified teachers. In Mississippi, legislation allows graduates with degrees that emphasize child development to teach prekindergarten and kindergarten. Louisiana will restructure its alternative-certification program to make it more efficient and more attractive to prospective teachers.

Critical shortage areas

Last session in Maryland, a law was passed that allows certain retired teachers to retain their retirement benefits if they are rehired as classroom teachers, substitute teachers or teacher mentors in low-performing schools, in local school systems where there are teacher shortages, or in subject in which there are critical shortages of teachers. Kentucky approved a similar policy this session. If there are too few qualified applicants for teaching positions, a limited number of retired teachers and administrators may be rehired — without losing retirement benefits — to teach in critical shortage areas, including subject areas, grade levels or geographic areas. Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas also allow retired teachers to return to the classroom.

Legislation approved in Mississippi will provide teachers in geographic shortage areas with scholarships to work on master's or specialist degrees. The Mississippi Employer-Assisted Housing Teacher Program that provides loans to teachers in geographic areas with critical shortages is extended for another year. Teachers receive loans of up to $6,000 that are forgivable after three years of teaching in the shortage areas.

Georgia hopes to attract teachers of math, science, special education and foreign languages to schools and school systems where there are not enough qualified teachers. Teachers who agree to teach these subjects in these schools will receive up to an additional step on the salary schedule. The Office of Education Accountability will determine whether a school or system is experiencing a shortage. Oklahoma will establish a program to repay loans for math and science majors. The state will determine the average cost of annual tuition and fees at state universities that offer teacher programs. Upon completion of five years of teaching, each recipient will receive three years' worth of this average amount.

This session, Virginia expanded the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program to include scholarships to support subject areas with critical shortages of teachers. Recipients must agree to teach in Virginia in geographic or subject areas in which there are critical shortages or in schools with high concentrations of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. In 1999, Texas authorized a grant program for teachers who agree to work for five years either in geographic areas or in subject areas with shortages.

Low-performing schools

In Florida, districts with low-performing schools or alternative schools for disruptive students must develop plans to recruit and retain teachers who show mastery in improving student performance as defined by the commissioner of education. These teachers are eligible for annual bonuses of $1,000 to $3,500. Florida created the Student Fellowship Program to recruit college juniors and paraprofessionals into teaching. Recipients are required to work with children through internships or to work with a master teacher as a mentor. Within five years of graduation, each recipient must teach for three years at a public school in Florida or two years at a low-performing school (one that receives a rating of D or F).

Building on earlier efforts to expand Advanced Placement, legislation approved this session in Florida will provide each AP teacher with a $50 bonus for every student who receives a score of 3 or

higher on the College Board Advanced Placement examination. An additional bonus of $500 will be awarded to each AP teacher in a school that receives a D or F rating if at least one student scores a 3 or higher. These bonuses may not exceed $2,000 per year.

The Master Reading Teacher Program approved last year in Texas is designed to improve the reading performance of students at high-need schools. Certified teachers who teach primarily reading and mentor others who teach reading will receive stipends of $5,000 per year. Maryland provides $2,000 stipends annually to teachers with advanced professional certificates who teach satisfactorily in low-performing schools.

Teacher performance and pay

SREB states are focusing on creating fair, effective evaluations of teachers and on providing assistance to teachers with unsatisfactory performance. States also are working to increase salaries for new and veteran teachers and to reward teachers who accept additional responsibilities.

Evaluations and dismissals

The Kentucky Board of Education will set statewide standards for evaluating certified personnel. These standards will measure: effective planning and classroom management; knowledge of subject matter; respectfulness of diversity; effective communication with peers, students and parents; use of resources, including technology; professional growth; and ethics.

Last year, Maryland's General Assembly allowed the probationary period to be extended for new teachers who, after two years, do not qualify for tenure based on performance evaluations. If a teacher demonstrates potential for improvement, the probationary period may be extended for another year, and he or she will be assigned a mentor. The teacher's performance will be evaluated again after the third year.

The Teacher Accountability Act in Alabama allows schools to cancel teachers' contracts if they fail to perform duties in a satisfactory manner. In its school accountability bill, Mississippi specifies that teachers in low-performing schools who need improvement (as determined by evaluation teams) must participate in a professional-development plan. Failure to improve may result in dismissal after two years.

In Georgia, teachers will be evaluated annually based on several factors: participation in professional development; communication with students, parents, other teachers and school personnel; personal conduct; adherence to school rules and procedures; students' academic progress; and principals' observations. Contracts will not be renewed until after evaluations are completed. Teachers who receive two unsatisfactory evaluations in a five-year period will not be eligible for a renewable certificate until the identified deficiencies have been addressed. Teachers whose contracts are not renewed may request a written explanation. Georgia also eliminated tenure for new teachers.

This session Delaware created the Professional Standards Board, which will advise the state Board of Education. The Professional Standards Board will propose rules and regulations regarding teacher education, licensure and certification, recruitment, evaluation and professional development. This board is charged with developing a new teacher-evaluation system. Student improvement — based on factors such as student performance on annual assessments — will constitute at least 20 percent of the evaluation. Districts will develop and assign improvement plans and professional development for teachers with unsatisfactory evaluations. Beginning in 2003, a pattern of ineffective teaching may become the basis for dismissal.

Pending legislation in South Carolina requires the State Board of Education and the Department of Education to review and revise the performance component of the state's teacher-evaluation program. The bill calls for the development of procedures that include student achievement in teacher evaluations.

Linking performance to pay

In 1999, Florida adopted a plan for performance pay. Each year, districts will evaluate teachers based on several factors, including student performance, classroom management, subject matter knowledge and the ability to evaluate students' instructional needs. During the 2000 session, legislators clarified that teachers who demonstrate outstanding performance will be eligible to earn 5 percent salary bonuses. In Georgia, no teacher who receives an unsatisfactory evaluation will advance on the salary schedule that year.

Teacher salaries

In an effort to increase teacher salaries by 10 percent over the next two years, Maryland established the Governor's Teacher Salary Challenge Program. The state will provide pay raises of 1 percent for teachers in districts that authorize cost-of-living increases of 4 percent. In 1999, Maryland approved a plan to provide signing bonuses of $1,000 to teachers who graduate in the top 10 percent of their class and teach for at least three years.

Alabama approved two bills this session that address teacher salaries. One provides up to a 5.5 percent raise for experienced teachers and a 1 percent increase for beginning teachers. (Beginning teachers' salaries in Alabama are already high compared with those in other states nationwide.) The second bill contains a long-term plan to raise teacher salaries to the national average. Once the average is attained, the state will keep pace with it. Teacher pay raises are dependent on state revenue growth.

In his budget proposal, North Carolina's governor has included funds for the final step in a four-year plan to raise salaries to the national average. This plan raises the state minimum-salary schedule and provides bonuses for teachers who are mentors, who have advanced state certificates or national certification, or who teach in high-performing schools. Mississippi set a goal of increasing its average salary for teachers to the Southeastern average. The five-year effort will begin in 2002.

Oklahoma approved $3,000 pay raises for teachers and will increase the minimum-salary schedule. Delaware will implement a new salary schedule that will provide salary increases for both beginning and experienced teachers. In addition, teachers will have the opportunity to earn bonuses by acquiring specific skills and knowledge that lead to more effective instruction or by accepting additional academic responsibilities.

Voters in Louisiana will decide this fall whether the state's tax system will be restructured. If the plan is approved, sales taxes on food and utilities will be eliminated and the state income tax will increase. Much of the revenue generated will be used to raise teacher salaries to the regional average.

Support for teachers

States are making considerable efforts to support new teachers through mentor programs and to provide all teachers with professional-development opportunities.

Mentor programs

Maryland committed last year to providing competitive grants to local boards for expanding mentor programs for teachers. Priority is given to schools that meet two conditions: (1) at least 40 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches; and (2) student assessment scores are at or below satisfactory level or at least half of the teachers have less than five years' experience. In Kentucky, a classroom teacher may receive additional compensation for serving as a mentor, teaching partner or professional-development leader. Supervising teachers also may be eligible for up to six hours of tuition-free coursework at universities. Pending legislation in South Carolina would provide mentor teachers with incentives such as additional pay, release time and additional classroom assistance.

The Mentor Teacher School Pilot Program was created this session in Florida to improve the structure of the teaching profession. The program, to be implemented in 2001-02, will create a five-level career path for teachers; each level will have a different set of duties and salary range. Teachers at the highest level — mentor teachers — will teach less and spend more time providing other teachers with coaching and staff development.

Professional development

Legislation in Kentucky established the Teachers' Professional Growth Fund to provide teachers with tuition reimbursements and stipends for college courses and professional-development activities. Priority for funding will be given to middle school teachers through 2004; for the first two of these years (through 2002), mathematics teachers also will be a priority. The measure creates the Center for Middle School Academic Achievement to improve middle school teachers' content knowledge and teaching practices in core subject areas. Teacher academies in subject areas will be developed, and teachers of core disciplines who do not have majors or minors in those subjects will be given priority for participation in these academies. The Department of Education will establish an electronic bulletin to provide teachers with information about professional-development opportunities.

Virginia lifted the cap on the number of teacher-training institutes that may be established. These institutes are held at two- and four-year colleges and provide technology training for teachers.

District professional-development activities in Florida will focus on subject-area knowledge and teaching methods. Topics will include technology, assessment and data analysis, classroom management and school safety. In addition, school principals must establish individual professional-development plans for all teachers based on their students' performance.

Delaware will fund five additional professional-development days (for a total of eight) by 2003. Alabama added funding for two additional professional-development days in the 1999-2000 budget.

Other actions

Legislation in Virginia requires local school boards to ensure that elementary school teachers have at least three hours during the school week for planning time.

Upcoming studies

The West Virginia Legislature created a task force on teacher quality. Issues to be addressed include the quality of teacher education and professional development for teachers; teacher salaries; supply of and demand for teachers; staff development for teachers; and training in how to integrate technology into the classroom. The task force will make its final report next year.

Virginia commissioned a study on the demand for and preparation of teachers. The study will project the number of teachers needed over the next 10 years, will review recruitment and retention efforts, and will recommend how to attract and retain an adequate supply of teachers. The results will be reported to the 2001 General Assembly.

The General Assembly in Kentucky commissioned a study on teacher compensation and benefits. Legislation also requires the Department of Education to work with other agencies to create a plan to recruit teachers.

A Florida study will compare the performance of teachers who gained certification through state-approved preparation programs; those who completed alternative-certification programs; and those with standard teaching certificates from other states.

A committee in Tennessee will review the process of obtaining additional qualifications for teachers and will recommend ways to streamline the process. Another bill that calls for a study of the effectiveness of programs that prepare teachers to teach reading is awaiting the governor's signature.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE